



## Stormwater Fact Sheet



### Storm Drains

Stormwater, the runoff from rain or melting snow, picks up dirt, chemicals, oil and pet waste as it 'runs off' hard surfaces like roads, sidewalks and roofs. Stormwater is carried by gutters to storm drains that lead directly to the nearest creek, stream or lake. Stormwater receives no treatment.

### Water Pollution

Stormwater is the single largest water pollution source in North Carolina and the nation. The number one pollutant, by volume, is sediment (dirt). The primary source of sediment is erosion from agriculture, development and eroding streambeds.

### Soil Test

A soil test lets you know how much of a given chemical your yard needs, because fertilizers can deliver different chemicals at different rates. Soil tests are available at no cost from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

### Fertilizer

Applying more fertilizer than grass can use wastes money. It can also cause water pollution. When fertilizer reaches streams, it encourages algae to grow. When algae blooms die off, they use up much of the water's oxygen and can cause a fish kill.

### Yard Waste

Grass clippings and leaves, if left in the gutter, can wash into storm drains and be carried to local creeks, streams and rivers. Yard waste acts like a fertilizer in the water and can stimulate algae growth.

### Washing Vehicles

Do-it-yourself car washers should wash cars over grass or gravel. Otherwise the soap, oil and road dirt run off the driveway, into the gutter and down to the closest storm drain.

### Cigarette Butts

In the US, we toss out more than 175 million pounds of cigarette butts every year. Cigarette filters are not biodegradable, and can take up to 12 years to break down. Toxic chemicals in cigarettes often leak out when cigarette butts are swept into water systems by wind and rain (cigarette butts can leach chemicals such as cadmium, lead and arsenic into our environment within an hour of contact with water).

### Why Scoop the Poop?

Pet waste is like any other waste – loaded with microbes that can harm human health. Pet waste can also act like a fertilizer and stimulate algae growth. When we leave pet waste on sidewalks and streets, rain picks it up and carries it to the nearest storm drain where it contaminates rivers and lakes.

### Home Oil Changers

Just one quart of waste oil can contaminate one million gallons of clean water, so disposing of used waste oil properly is vital. Many garages, auto parts stores and quick-change services will take your used oil and recycle it. Never throw used oil onto grass because the petroleum products can reach and contaminate groundwater.